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Lehigh anthropology professor Allison Mickel speaks to a crowd gather at the STEPS lawn that gathered in solidarity for Palestine on Nov. 9, 2023. (Liana Secondino/B&W Staff)

Demonstration in support of Palestine draws mixed reactions

BY EDWARD FUHRER, LIANA SECONDINO AND SAM BARNEY-GIBBS — ; PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 9, 2023, 3:22 PM ;
UPDATED NOVEMBER 14, 2023, 2:14 AM [NEWS](#)

Over 200 students and community members gathered on the STEPS lawn Thursday, Nov. 9, to show their solidarity for Palestine as the Israel-Hamas conflict continues. The Student Political Action Committee and Lehigh4Palestine organized the demonstration.

The demonstration started at 1 p.m. and encouraged students to walk out of their classes.

At around 2:30 p.m., the group marched and chanted from the STEPS lawn to the flagpole in front of the University Center. Guest speaker and Palestinian-born writer Raya Abdelaal and others then led another round of chants. The students then returned to the STEPS lawn and dispersed just after 3 p.m.

The demonstration drew mixed reactions due to some statements and signage presented by some demonstrators.

Jennah Abdelaziz, '24, spoke at the demonstration and said condemning a political movement and a governmental body should not be equated to condemning a religious group.

"We have many Jewish allies among us today and across the globe who do not identify with the state of Israel and Zionism, who are fighting for Palestinian life and liberation alongside us," Abdelaziz said.

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Demonstration in support of Palestine draws mixed reactions



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Ciaran Buitrago, an organizer of the demonstration and a director for the Student Political Action Coalition, wrote in an email to *The Brown and White* that the demonstration included three Jewish speakers and many Jewish attendees. He also wrote that the group condemned antisemitism and violence from both Hamas and the Israeli military.

"We took every precaution to ensure the demonstration was peaceful, welcoming, and diverse," Buitrago wrote.

Allison Mickel, the chair of the global studies department and an anthropology professor, said when Lehigh students see harm, violence and genocide in the world, they show up.

She said she is an archaeologist and understands how her field has been used to erase Palestinian presence on the land for hundreds of years.

"That is what is happening now. That is what has been happening. That is oppression. That is everyday violence in between the bombs," Mickel said. "I am here as a scholar who studies oppression, and I know it when I see it, and Palestine is suffering."

Mickel said she has been waking up to bloody photos of her friends and colleague's family members for weeks, and as a Jewish person she was raised to believe in the value of Tikkun olam, the idea of healing the world.

Rawan Katz, a Bethlehem resident, recently protested for Palestine in New York City and Washington D.C. She grew up in Jordan and moved to the United States when she was 15 years old. She was born and raised Muslim and now has a Jewish husband and said they practice both faiths.

"Just be human and love other humans," Katz said. "If you speak human and love other humans, nobody is better than anybody."

A.B., '26, said the group at the gathering has been in attendance at other social movements, and she believes being pro-Palestinian and pro-peace intertwined.

"You cannot continue bombing people and continuing occupation under a violent regime and say that's peace because it's not," A.B. said. "I think people need to recognize that this isn't a religious issue."

Layan Suleiman, '25, said students can take action by calling their representatives.

She asked Lehigh to divest its relations with Israel and make their voices heard by posting and sharing, and tagging Lehigh and local representatives to put pressure on them.

Signs reading "Zionism is murder" and a chant, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," were present at the event and led to mixed reactions over the intentions and potential repercussions of the messages.

In advance of the demonstration, the director of Jewish Student Life and Rabbi Steve Nathan reiterated in an email to the campus community that Lehigh is safe for Jewish students and mentioned students are entitled to their First Amendment rights to hold the demonstration.

THE 159th LEHIGH-LAFAYETTE GAME College Football's Most Played Rivalry



November 18, 2023 at Lehigh University's Goodman Stadium

Game Time - 12:00 p.m.
The game begins at 12:00 p.m. Please arrive up to 30 minutes early to allow for heavy foot traffic and bag checks at the entrance. Once inside Goodman Stadium, spectators will not be permitted to leave and re-enter (including hallways). Spectators will not be allowed into Goodman Stadium after halftime. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted inside Goodman Stadium. Visibly intoxicated persons will not be permitted to enter the stadium. All spectators will be searched at the entrance (bags larger than 12" x 12" x 10" are not permitted in the Stadium). The University's alcohol policy and PA State law are enforced on and around the campus.

Spectatorship
Lehigh fans are asked to cheer FOR LEHIGH ("Let's go Lehigh! And 'Beat Lafayette'") and not against the opponent. Being loud in support of our team helps us, being abusive towards the other team does not. The Patriot League institutions have made a commitment to ensure that their athletic programs promote and require the highest standards of sporting behavior and ethical conduct by all participants (student-athletes, coaches, staff and faculty). Additionally, Lehigh University demands the highest standards from all supporters (students, alumni, other spectators, bands, cheerleaders, sport groups).

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Behavior and Consequences
Prior to the game, students are expected to follow tailgating policies and procedures. Any student who behaves in a disruptive manner will face criminal and University consequences which may include arrest and immediate suspension from the University.

Stay Off the Field of Play
Spectators are not permitted to enter the playing field at any time. Entering the field of play before or during the game may result in disciplinary action being taken by the University.

Game Day
Buses will run continuously to bring students from Asia Pacific Campus over to Goodman Stadium beginning at 8:00 a.m. All buses will load and depart from Taylor Street in front of the College Center. A ticket to the game is required to board the bus.

All Ride Share Drop Off and Pick Up
All Ride Share drop off and pick up are located at the flag poles in front of Stadium Avenue. No Ride Share vehicles are permitted on Stadium Road which runs to the front gates of Goodman Stadium.

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Nathan wrote in an email following the demonstration on Friday that Lehigh “feels just a little less safe and a little less welcoming than it did just a little over a day ago.” He wrote that he thought the rally contained antisemitic statements and made some Jewish students uncomfortable.

He wrote that the message on the signs — “Zionism is murder” — applies to all Zionists, in his opinion, even those who wish for an independent Palestinian state, such as himself and many Jewish students on campus.

Buitrago wrote that the anti-Zionist sentiments are not antisemitic, and he believes asserting such reduces Jewish identity and is an “attack on freedom of speech.”

“The idea that a state that elevates Judaism over other groups is necessary for the protection and self-determination of Jews is offensive to our Jewish organizers and many Jews globally,” Buitrago wrote.

Nathan also wrote that the sentiment of the chant — “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” — can only become true if Israel no longer exists.

“To state that Jews cannot live as free people in their ancestral homeland is de facto an anti-Semitic statement,” Nathan wrote.

A group of leaders from Chabad at Lehigh wrote an email to University President Joseph Helble, ‘82, on Nov. 10 in response to rising antisemitism on Lehigh’s campus, and they specifically referred to the chant.

The Chabad leaders wrote that they think this is a rallying cry for terrorist groups and their sympathizers, but they wrote it is also often used by pro-Palestinian activists as a call to arms. They wrote that it calls for the erasure of the Israeli state and its people.

“Since the founding of Chabad at Lehigh, Dit (Greenberg) and I have never witnessed organized, proud displays of blatant antisemitism on campus,” the email reads. “This by far is the greatest public display of antisemitism and Anti-Israel sentiment that Lehigh has seen in decades.”

Buitrago wrote that this chant is used at pro-Palestine protests globally and believes it’s not a call for the destruction of Israel or Jewish people, but rather a wish for an end to the inhumane practices and apartheid system imposed by the Israeli government on the Palestinian people.

Though the statements may not have been intended to be antisemitic, Nathan wrote that he is “unsure” if it is and called on the university to condemn antisemitism on campus, just as it would condemn bias or prejudice expressed toward other groups.

The email from Chabad included claims that the chant violates the university’s Policy on Harassment and Non-Discrimination and the Student Code of Conduct.

In an email to the campus community sent Sunday, Nov. 12, Helble wrote that though the demonstration was peaceful, some behaviors and signage at the demonstration contained

Tweets from @LUBrownWhite

The Brown and White
@LUBrownWhite · 52m



“I was drawn to this position because I love working with undergraduates,” Austin said. “I love helping students. I love helping students who maybe even struggle with some of the similar things that I (did), like, ‘I have no idea what I want to study.’”

thebrownandwhite.c...
Kelly Austin inspires students through ...



The Brown and White
@LUBrownWhite · 4h



McQuilken led Lehigh to a 20-13-1 record and threw for nearly 7,000 career yards across three seasons before heading to the NFL and eventually becoming an executive vice president at Cartoon Network.

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Lehigh’s only NFL quarterback reflects ...



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@LUBrownWhite · 4h



If you’re arresting people, you’re a governing entity. Right?

thebrownandwhite.c...
Editorial: Are Lehigh police a private ...



The Brown and White
@LUBrownWhite · Nov 13



The NBA is back! With basketball soon to be on TV nearly every night, you may wonder: which team should I watch? What can I look forward to this season?

Luckily for you, I’m here to answer these questions by giving you 10 things to watch this NBA season

thebrownandwhite.c...
Parker’s Sports Corner: 10 things to ...



The Brown and White
@LUBrownWhite · Nov 13



Social media is bad, we know that. And yet. we can’t get off it.

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Editorial: TikTok
addiction makes us ...

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"(The mayor) was hearing from residents that they love living in the city and they love their neighborhood," Satullo said. "But this park is really sad and (residents) asked if he could do something about it."

thebrownandwhite.c...
New playground to
foster more sense of...

The Brown and White

@LUBrownWhite · Nov 12

The Brown and White spoke with coach Brett Reed about what to watch out for with Lehigh this year and the current landscape of college basketball.

thebrownandwhite.c...
Q&A with Lehigh
men's basketball he...

The Brown and White

@LUBrownWhite · Nov 9

Replying to @LUBrownWhite

About 200 students and local community members gathered on the STEPS lawn Thursday afternoon to show their solidarity for Palestine as the Israel-Hamas conflict continues.

1

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@LUBrownWhite · Nov 9

BREAKING: Hundreds gather on campus to show solidarity for Palestine

thebrownandwhite.com/2023/11/09/humanity/

6

12

The Brown and White

@LUBrownWhite · Nov 9

"So, we made it into International Voices, which includes everyone," Cusumano said. "There are domestic students, international students, and we have staff and faculty who have contributed to the magazine."

thebrownandwhite.c...
International Voices
magazine invites

magazine invites ...

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@LUBrownWhite · Nov 9

Lehigh students are faced with a tough decision every election: should they vote in their home state or in Northampton County?

thebrownandwhite.c...
Students decide whether to vote in ...

1

The Brown and White

@LUBrownWhite · Nov 8

A small amount of mercury was found in a room on the first floor of Iacocca Hall in the C-Wing, according to a HawkWatch alert sent to the campus community Wednesday evening by Jason Schiffer, the assistant vice president of campus safety.

thebrownandwhite.c...
BREAKING: Mercury found in Iacocca Hal...

1

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@LUBrownWhite · Nov 8

Amid this artistry, I cannot help but wonder where the sculptures commemorating real Black individuals are. I mean, after all, we have statues of nameless people.

thebrownandwhite.c...
Edit Desk: Where are all the Black statues?

1

The Brown and White

@LUBrownWhite · Nov 8

Lykens was named a first-team Division II All-American twice by the National Field Hockey Coaches Association while playing at West Chester University, where she won two national championships and was conference player of the year in her senior season.

thebrownandwhite.c...
Lehigh field hockey coach wraps up first ...

1

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@LUBrownWhite · Nov 8

In a world driven by consumerism and the pursuit of professional success, the

value of friendship often takes a backseat.

thebrownandwhite.c...
Editorial: Live with your friends and do...

3

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@LUBrownWhite · Nov 7

The Lehigh men’s basketball team is welcoming four first-years this season: guards Nasir Whitlock, Joshua Ingram, and Cameron Gillus, and forward Jake Pike. The Brown and White sat down with the first-years to discuss their first season at Lehigh.

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Lehigh men’s basketball team ...

The Brown and White

@LUBrownWhite · Nov 6

Lehigh failed to take advantage of a halftime lead in an 84-78 loss against the Big Red in their season opener Monday night at Stabler Arena.

thebrownandwhite.c...
Lehigh men’s basketball falls to ...

The Brown and White

@LUBrownWhite · Nov 5

New Orleans Pelicans guard CJ McCollum, ’13, was diagnosed with a collapsed right lung following medical imaging Sunday morning, according to an update from the NBA released at 5 p.m. The Pelicans posted the medical update via X.

thebrownandwhite.c...
Lehigh alumnus, NBA player diagnosed wi...

1

The Brown and White

@LUBrownWhite · Nov 4

On a chilly fall afternoon in Goodman Stadium, Lehigh fell in an offensive battle with Holy Cross 28-24.

thebrownandwhite.c...
Lehigh loses close battle with Holy Cross

5

The Brown and White

antisemitic statements and language and violated Lehigh's Principles of Our Equitable Community.

"For these conversations to be effective, we must consider how words, slogans, chants and actions will be understood by others whose views or whose histories differ from ours," Helble wrote.

Buitrago wrote that he questions why the university does not outwardly condemn the Israeli military in addition to Hamas and is worried the purpose of the demonstration is being misconstrued.

"We are concerned that our beautiful demonstration for peace...is being labeled by some as a hateful demonstration due to the misinterpretation of a single chant," Buitrago wrote.

Abdelaal said she hoped Lehigh students in attendance would question what they see on their social media feeds and evaluate if the information they see is true or not.

She said there is lots of propaganda circulating about this conflict in Israel and Gaza.

"You're going to hear a lot of lies," Abdelaal said. "Fact check what you are hearing and make sure the sources that you're getting it from are factual."

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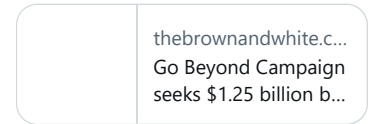
NOVEMBER 9, 2023

Students decide whether to vote in Pennsylvania or in their home state

THE BROWN AND WHITE
@LUBrownWhite · Nov 4



President Helble unveiled a \$1.25 billion fundraising goal by 2028 for a new university-wide fundraising initiative, Go Beyond: The Campaign for Future Makers.



2



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The Brown and White is Lehigh University's student newspaper based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The newspaper covers Lehigh University news and the surrounding Bethlehem area, and it aims to serve as a platform for conversation and idea exchange.

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